

New Chief Ready for Challenges

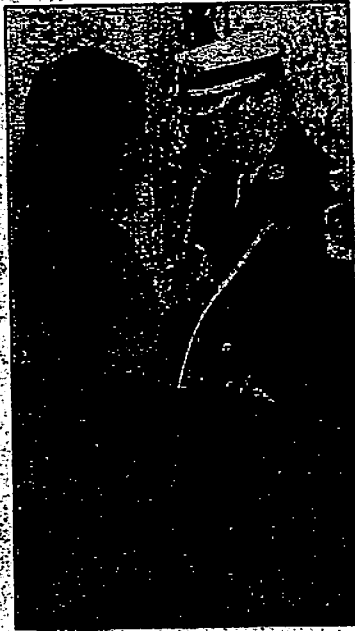
By KEITH L. MARTIN

As fast as it passed, new Fire Chief Kevin Nord will always remember his first week on the job in Duxbury.

Nord describes the week as "up and down," which is understandable when you factor in that it involved his badge pinning ceremony and the death of his father, Peter Dalby Nord, a day later, as well as a fiscal year 2006 budget and plan to preserve paramedic services in town waiting for his immediate attention.

While daunting for some, Nord said that with two weeks under his belt, he has relied on his own department and others in town to help with the transition to his new role.

continued on page 20



New Duxbury Fire Chief Kevin Nord gets his badge pinned on by wife Mary during a ceremony at the Senior Center on October 20.

continued from page one

"The group here at the fire department has allowed me to get settled and everyone in town has given me little pearls of wisdom and offered their help when needed at just a phone call away," said Nord.

With the August retirement of former Fire Chief William Harriman and the retirement of Deputy Chief Wayne Sjostedt last month, Nord said that he did not get much of a transition period with the previous leaders of the department, but understands the situation and was prepared for it coming into the job. He and Harriman will be meeting soon for an education on last year's fire department budget and likely tips on Nord's next request for funding from the town.

"I've always looked for the opportunity to make a system better or bring it up another notch and I was pretty much hitting the ceiling where I was, as the chief and deputy chief were fairly young guys, so this opportunity appealed to me instantly."

—Duxbury Fire Chief Kevin Nord

Preserving advanced life support, however, will be a task that will take much longer and a lot more financial planning. Last month, Jordan Hospital announced that it could no longer afford to provide dedicated paramedics to four towns, including Duxbury, effective January 1, 2005.

This means that while Duxbury firefighters trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) can provide basic life support, such as CPR, paramedics providing advanced life support, such as distribution of medications, will have to be sought out from area towns rather than being available through Jordan and stationed at Ashdod Fire Station.

While Jordan initially offered to extend the services through June 2005 if the towns pitched in financially, Nord said as of last week, Jordan will be stopping the service on the first day of the new year. American Medical Response, which provides paramedics for Jordan's service, has offered to deploy extra, non-dedicated vehicles if needed in an emergency.

The short-term solution, he said, is relying on mutual aid from area towns such as Pembroke, Kingston and Marshfield which have dedicated paramedics in-house, but that is merely a temporary fix.

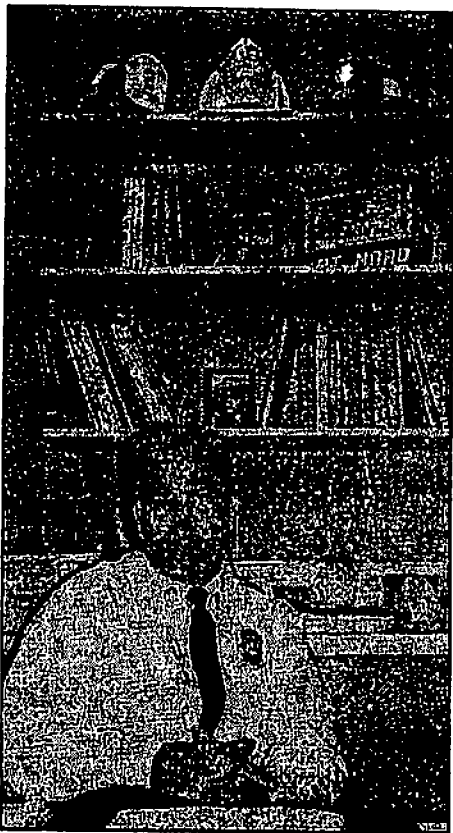
"We can only rely on the kindness of our neighbors for so long," said Nord. "That creates a ripple effect of taking away from their taxpayers and will run thin."

Instead, Nord is prepared to put together a proposal for the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager Rocco Longo to establish Duxbury's own advanced life support service, provided by firefighters with paramedic training.

"My goal is to replace firefighters by way of attrition with paramedics so we have an in-house system," he said. "Unfortunately, that is a two to three year build-out, as firefighters retire, but we are now faced with an acceleration of that plan, so it's something where I'll sit with the town manager and find a fiscally responsible plan, but with the best coverage."

These challenges as the head of a department are exactly what Nord expected coming into any leadership role in fire services and embraces now that he is in Duxbury. With a passion for his job he hopes others find contagious, he embraces all of the new responsibilities placed upon fire departments, from medical emergencies to dealing with terrorism.

"Fire seems to be the 'catch-all' so we constantly have to change," he said. "We do it all, so that type of



After 26 years with the Kingston Fire Department, new Fire Chief Kevin Nord is looking forward to leading the Duxbury Fire Department.

uniqueness of this job has always appealed to me."

Nord, 45, became a call firefighter in Kingston in 1977 and a year later was appointed the department's first Emergency Medical System (EMS) coordinator, setting up formal EMS training for staff. In 1987, he became the department's first paramedic and in 1994 assumed the role of captain until earlier this year when he accepted the top spot in Duxbury.

"I've always looked for the opportunity to make a system better or bring it up another notch and I was pretty much hitting the ceiling where I was, as the chief and deputy chief were fairly young guys, so this opportunity appealed to me instantly," he said.

Nord's family is also excited about his new position, as evident on the

faces of his wife of 11 years, Mary, and children Josh, 9, Caitlin, 6, and Caroline, 2, at his badge ceremony. Daughter Jessica, 25, who lives in Alabama, was unable to make the ceremony.

With his new role, Nord said he wants to not only provide the best services for the citizens of Duxbury, but also "grow as a person," learning something from the other town professionals around him given their municipal experience.

Last week, the new chief held a departmental meeting with firefighters and staff to outline his expectations, hear from them and made two immediate changes to the department. First, they will no longer be accepting cash for permits from builders and for burning, but instead rely upon checks. This move, said Nord, is to avoid too much free cash from being in the office.

He has also revoked red lights for off-duty personnel to use in their own vehicles, which he calls a throwback to volunteer firefighters, but with Duxbury's narrow roads, could be more of a liability than a benefit.

"We want to avoid that liability of someone being hurt or killed as they get to a call," he said. "This might rub some the wrong way, but we are now telling our members to flow with traffic and do the best you can [to get to a scene]."

Concerning further changes to the department, Nord said that government moves slowly as does the fire services, with the unofficial motto of "150 years of tradition unimpeded by progress."

"People don't like change and want an explanation," he said. "We won't change for change's sake...but for positive outcomes. As long as you give that explanation, change comes relatively smoothly."